

NC Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education Center

Goal area of the activity: Engaging the Public

Summary: Findings in a consensus report, The State of Disconnectedness: An Examination of Mathematics and Science Instruction in the North Carolina Public Schools, developed by the N.C. Public School Forum in 1995, showed that poor communication, blurred lines of accountability, and a failure to marshal the wealth of resources have lessened the likelihood that substantial progress will be made in the areas of science, mathematics, and technology education in North Carolina. In 2001, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund found that not much has changed since this report was published. The Burroughs Wellcome Fund supported the development of collaborative partnerships to catalyze the establishment of a new, neutral, non-profit entity that could function as a science, mathematics, and technology (SMT) education champion for North Carolina. Hence, the North Carolina Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education was created.

Purpose: The mission of the Center is to systematically improve performance in science, mathematics, and technology pre K-12 education as a means of providing all children in North Carolina with the necessary knowledge and skills in science, mathematics, and technology to have successful careers, be good citizens, and advance the economy of the state. The SMT Education Center will be an essential element in the march to achieving North Carolina's vision of having the best public schools in the nation by 2010. The following goals could map a path to knowledge gains by all children in science, mathematics, and technology pre K-12 education.

- To articulate a vision for science, mathematics, and technology education in North Carolina to broaden awareness of the need for a scientifically literate workforce and to solicit support for high quality programs of instruction;
- To work with government, industry, the education community and parents to connect and facilitate achieving continuously improving level of performance in science, mathematics, and technology by all children in pre K-12; and to advocate for equitable and adequate resources for all pre K-12 children;
- To mobilize expertise and leverage resources to reach all pre K-12 children in each of North Carolina's 117 school systems to foster comprehensive and challenging programs of instruction in science, mathematics, and technology instruction including the dissemination of effective tools and learning methods and the provision of technical assistance to educational leaders (including principals and teachers); and
- To work with existing organizations to research, develop, and disseminate information on the state of science, mathematics, and technology pre K-12 education to policymakers and the media in order to improve decision-making and to identify gaps that need to be addressed.

Accomplishments: The Center is offering its first program, the Teacher Link Program, to connect scientists, mathematicians, and engineers with teachers in the classrooms. A major component of this program is to not only educate the scientists on how to assist teachers in the implementation of their curriculum, but to also educate them on the K-12 education process and the political factors influencing classroom instruction. As a result, these scientists, engineers, and mathematicians can become engaged in public policy, work with local school boards, advocate for higher level curriculum, and work with parents.

Plans for the next 12 months include: The Center's strategy includes hosting educational forums across the state, creating a network of SMT "police" in each community to support, encourage, and insure that science, mathematics, and technology are seen as critical/essential areas of study for every student, conducting an inventory of SMT programs being offered, assessing available school data and recommending changes, and communicating to teachers and school leaders what resources are available.